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SUMMARY

RATIONED AND GUARANTEED SUPPLY OF THE POPULATION OF CROATIA DURING WORLD WAR I

Purveyance, 1914-1918

During World War I (1914-1918) food in the warring countries was primarily needed to supply the army. As elsewhere in Europe, Austria-Hungary instituted a war economy, and property of various kinds was taken (requisitioned) from the population for military needs, especially draught animals and food. There was a shortage of food and hunger appeared throughout the country, in the first place in towns but also in undeveloped non-agricultural areas. The long years of war exhausted food stores and led to widespread hunger in many parts of Austria-Hungary and Europe.

In the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, and in Croatia as well, a rationed and guaranteed supply of foodstuffs, called purveyance (approvisionnement, Latin: *providere* – provide, supply), was introduced right at the beginning of World War I, and more seriously after 1916, especially in the larger towns and later elsewhere.

Purveyance was a system of supplying the population with food on the basis of daily, weekly or monthly needs (especially with flour, lard, oil, salt, sugar and the like). The Government founded purveyance institutions as supply services to organise the procurement, supply, distribution and sale of food and other consumer goods that were in short supply especially during the war and immediately after it. By rationing and guaranteeing the supply, that is, by determining the amount and price of particular foods that were scarce, the Government tried to protect the more vulnerable classes of the population. Purveyancing continued to a lesser degree after World War I in the State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs, and then in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes/Kingdom of Yugoslavia, for as long as particular vital goods were in short supply, particularly during the early 1920s and even later.

Purveyance institutions, committees in towns and municipalities, issued various kinds of coupons, consumer cards, purchaser cards, purchasing permits and buyer cards on the basis of legal provisions, usually to a particular person (whose name was written on the allocation coupon) who had the right to buy a certain kind of food for a fixed maximum price. The amount of the food that could be bought and its maximum price changed depending on production and reserves.

The variety and interesting organisation of the rationed and guaranteed supply of the population of Croatia during World War I is shown here by a collection of different coupons, consumer cards, purchaser cards, purchasing permits and buyer cards.